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The problem of educating slum children is special and should not be buttressed with democratic slogans. An example of the latter is giving slum children an opportunity to have teachers who are known to be good in other schools. Transferred to the slum school, they become demoralized and fail. Their insufficient social awareness and their lack of appropriate skills make them ineffective. Though broad school objectives may be the same for all groups, the personnel, material and techniques differ for each group.

An encouraging concern of educators for lower status children is the emphasis of middle class values, such as the three R's, obedience, and courtesy. This is advantageous to functioning in a modern community.

Some suggestions for helping pupils in depressed areas are - 1.) The need for more useful insights into various subcultures, 2.) The need for adaptation of curriculum content and materials, 3.) The need for better focused teacher training, 4.) The need for establishing appropriate teacher style and technique, 5.) The need to systematize various kinds of "corrective" services at school.

Objectivity and intellectual honesty comes first in dealing with slum children and curriculum for their schools.

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CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVES FOR SLUM SCHOOLS

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I am convinced that every educational researcher has a touch of the Walter Mitty in him. Somewhere in his dreams there lurks the vision of producing one Pet Project, one creative splash, that would shower him with satisfaction -- perhaps even glory -- if only he had the time, the freedom and the wherewithal.

My own ambition along such lines is somewhat macabre. I hope some day to describe in fine detail the vast graveyard of educational ideas in this country. It would be sort of a critical compendium of promising practices gone sour, innovations that flashed to life briefly and brilliantly, but are now dead and buried. Some of these ideas are now lifeless because research evidence deflated them. Others are discredited because research evidence which proved them valuable was rebutted by popular biases that deemed them worthless. Others still, simply died of malnutrition because nobody cared enough to sustain them. The only unique feature of this graveyard is that some of its inhabitants have a tendency to rise from the dead and give the impression that they are being born rather than reborn.

One prominent burial plot accomodates a host of educational ideas for depressed areas. Here lie also the hopes we had once pinned on panaceas that subsequently fizzled. How seductive were some of the sure-fire, well-meaning tactics for eliminating school problems in high delinquency areas! How sensible these solutions seemed but a short while ago, and how their failure has lingered on to haunt us. It was so easy and fashionable to believe that the educational ills of slum children could be cured simply by providing them with modern school buildings, decent sized classes, a rich variety of instructional equip-

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ment, lavish pupil personnel services and experienced teachers and principals. There is much naivete in these beliefs as there is in the quaint, popular faith recalled by Clifton Fadiman, to wit: "I have known amiable ladies quite confident that the universal institution of a hot lunch for school tots would solve most of our burning educational problems." If only the facts supported these assertions. Sadly, they do not. Learning conditions in many slum schools compare favorably with those in better neighborhoods; yet, learning and behavior problems remain critical among lower status children who attend them. And it is not enough consolation for us to contemplate how much more serious the problems would be if slum schools were <u>all</u> physically rundown and programmatically backward.

The foregoing doubts do not imply a plea for austere or second-rate school settings for pupils from lower status homes, or from any homes for that matter. I believe in rich surroundings and an abundance of services for all pupils. But I am also convinced that we do the disadvantaged target population a disservice by complaining simply about leaky ceilings and torn textbooks in their classes. It sounds like a good platform for social reformers, but the arguments are painfully shallow to educators. Some of the slum schools on the Lower East Side are modern buildings with a wide variety of up-to-date teaching materials. The average class size is actually lower than the average for the city schools, and they enjoy more guidance and remedial services than one finds in much richer neighborhood schools. Still, our records show severe retardation in all academic areas and a demoralizing problem of truancy and discipline even in these highly presentable settings.

Why ,then, should the problem persist? The answer is that merely aping the schools from the favored side of the tracks is not enough of a solution. Sharing alike the wealth that purchases educational services is a laudable

objective for egalitarians, but educators must think beyond that level. They must determine how the equal shares can best be spent appropriately and uniquely in every social setting in order to maximize the achievement of each pupil population. The broad school objectives may be the same for all groups but the personnel, material and techniques are different for each group.

Let us elaborate a bit further on the latter point as it applies to personnel. We all know that much has been said about teacher qualifications for slum schools, and much remains unsaid. It is true that staff turnover in these schools is a serious problem resulting in the sad fact that ill-prepared novices comprise the bulk of their teaching forces. The performance of veterans in these classrooms forces one to conclude also that the Malthusian theory of survival of the fittest does not necessarily apply to these teachers. Beginners who survive the initial impact of service in a difficult school are not always the most competent of the species. Yet here too we often tend to be trapped by shibboleths. When we plead for good teachers to be assigned to slum schools we simply betray a tendency to covet the staffs of better-neighborhood schools, assuming naively that a good teacher somewhere is bound to be a good teacher everywhere.

In truth, the breed of teachers successful in Harlem is probably different from that of Scarsdale. This impression was brought home rather forcefully for me when I learned of an attempt made by a New York City slum school to absorb skilled instructional manpower from silkier stocking schools. A number of district superintendents in "favored" neighborhoods were asked to nominate their best teachers for service with disadvantaged children. The nominees were then assembled and invited to become the nucleus of a staff in this single school in the hope of improving education there. Unfortunately,

the project failed. The hand-picked teachers, who had performed so masterfully in middle-class schools, soon became demoralized and wanted out. Teaching had become converted from a joy to a terror. Their former success could not be transplanted to unfamiliar soil.

There are undoubtedly some who will explain this failure in terms of blemished attitudes and insufficient social awareness among our teachers. It is often charged that teachers in depressed areas are hostile toward their pupils and generally lack understanding of lower-class life. I am a bit weary of such accusations. Having been in teacher education for a long enough time, I can easily recall a large number of pre-and in-service workers whose sympathies with lower status children seemed thoroughly genuine. What is more, they could recite in great detail the research findings on social stratification in America, including lower-class life styles and values. Many seem passionately dedicated to their jobs and are expending enormous energies to succeed. Yet their efforts are in vain. To accuse them of negativism, ignorance or indifference is patently unfair. More nearly approaching the truth is the fact that they lack appropriate skills in reaching their pupils instructionally, and neither our social critics nor our teacher trainers have developed enough know-how to help them.

By now many of you must be wondering why I draw attention to such a bleak picture. Perhaps I have devoted too much time to abortive efforts and deadends. But there is a lesson to be learned here, and for want of a more up-to-date term, I would have to call it "humility". There has been entirely too much evangelism in the field and too little patient thinking and hard-nosed research. Every so often we hear of reformers excoriating the schools for their poor records in depressed areas, and confidently suggesting solutions. Their well-meaning

efforts often attract an enthusiastic following of hopeful educators in desperate need of help. The letdown comes later, when the jeremiad is ended, the dust clears, and the results are in. The bald fact is that we have not solved the problem as yet, nor do we possess a fool-proof solution on the drawing board, and whoever thinks otherwise is either tampering with the truth or pipe-dreaming.

Having dispensed with the negativism, one can begin to offer some hopeful signs and possibilities, fully aware that they too may pass into oblivion for want of success. One encouraging impression I have of current concerns for educating lower status children is that such middle-class educational staples as the three R's, obedience, courtesy and the like are once again coming into their own even in curriculum planning for depressed area schools. This wasn't always so. About ten or twelve years ago many educators looked down their noses at these allegedly middle class values as gauche and inappropriate for this slice of the school population. The poor middle class teacher felt almost embarrassed to impose her time-honored school expectations upon her pupils for fear of propagating her bourgeois style of life among those whose life styles are quite different. The 1952 Yearbook of ASCD decried the school's accent on middle-class habits of gentility and diligence. It also borrowed heavily from Allison Davis' 1948 Inglis Lecture at Harvard in which he took schools to task for emphasizing verbal skills among a socio-economic group that doesn't put much stock in them.

Today things are different. There are still, to be sure, occasional rumblings about the narrow middle-class orientation of the school curriculum. But the major urban education projects around the country operate on the assumption that children are at school to learn the basic skills and behaviors necessary

for functioning in a modern community. There is no effort to de-emphasize certain learnings on the basis of their being under-emphasized in a particular sub-culture. They may have an intrinsic worth all their own that justifies their presence in the curriculum. For example, the need to teach a wide variety of skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking to all children seems to be fully recognized by our schools today, even though they also realize that some children start their education with less readiness than others because their social milieu lays little stress on these learnings.

Assuming, then, that the school is first and foremost a teaching institution -- not a social service or child policing center -- there are nevertheless, some important educational adjustments it can make in the hope of serving better the pupils in depressed areas. I would like to suggest some specifics:

1. The need for more useful insights into various sub-cultures: - Despite the vast amount of research on social class in America, some fundamental facts seem still to be distorted and other vital information seems still to be missing. For example, we have a tendency to refer to our lower status citizenry as if it were one huge, homogenous blob. Differences among sub-groups in this population are largely ignored. Social class is confused with caste, and impoverished Negroes are lumped together with southern hill-billies, Puerto Rican immigrants, and native white slum-dwellers, as if their life styles and educational problems were all of a kind. Economic deprivation is admittedly a common denominator for all these groups, but it certainly doesn't homogenize them. Teachers who work with a mixed population sense inter-group differences in the classroom and the implications that may be drawn for educational strategies. Still, our knowledge in such matters is not detailed and systematized. If we expect our teachers to know their depressed area pupils, much finer differentiations must be made than are now available. This is certainly fertile research ground for

social scientists.

As part of such an intensive study, a careful analysis of cognitive strengths and styles among lower status populations is certainly useful. The age-old question of middle vs. lower class IQ scores leads nowhere, I feel. What we need is more insight into comparative profiles of problem solving strengths and weaknesses, and how they develop over the years. Is the growth of some of these abilities stunted if proper nurture is not afforded them by a certain early age? (Shades of the not-so-old Developmental Task theory!). Is there a catching-up effect in the sharpening of some skills even after early inter-group differences are noted? (A study reported by Semler and Iscoe in the February, 1963 issue of the Journal of Educational Psychology shows a closing of the gap between Negro and white children in several learning tasks as the two groups matured from age 5 to age 9. What kinds of tasks show this pattern? What kinds of tasks show a widening of differences over the years; and can early intructional intervention force a convergence?) Is there a transfer of training payoff possible if certain weak spots on the ability profile are subjected to intensive training?

2. The need for adaptation of curriculum content and materials: - Although I am strongly in favor of teaching all children to read well, wisely and often, I am aware that there are at least as many ways to get the job done as there are to skin the proverbial cat. The crucial question, therefore, is not whether to emphasize reading for depressed area children but how to teach it most effectively and what material can best be employed. The same problem of strategy applies to all curriculum areas.

With respect to content, I think there is much room for modification for the sake of meaningfulness without sacrificing basic objectives. Story books can

contain plots and characters with whom lower status groups identify more easily. The Follett Basal Readers used widely in Detroit have taken a step in the right direction by including Negro characters, but the verbal content is still in the deadly "Bob sees Betty", "See Betty run" tradition. Classics, of course, are in a class by themselves, and their inclusion in the curriculum is therefore self-satisfying. Mozart's music should not be regarded as too perfumed, aristocratic, and archaic to appeal to slum neighborhood children. It is a great cultural heritage for all to appreciate. However, plunging into it head-on may be fatal in depressed area schools. The road to Mecca may have to be a long one, with stopovers in the more familiar fields of the dance, folk-music and the like before a bridge could be built. But build we must.

In the social studies there is also ample room for modifying content while retaining intent. An analysis of civic life, for example, strikes different student populations in different ways.* The lower status student needs exposure to knowledge about social service agencies, intergroup relations, the economics of community life, and a wealth of information about the impact of technology on employment opportunities, skills needed to "get ahead" in the big city, health, and the law.* Not that these topics should be restricted to slum schools, nor should a study of city government be excluded from them. It is all a matter of emphasis and applicability, and the resourceful curriculum planner can do much to effect better adjustments in most content areas.

Two additional thoughts regarding materials suggest themselves at this point. The first grows out of our knowledge about the motoric orientation of lower status children; the second has to do with teachers' difficulties in "getting through" to these pupils during the lesson.

There are many instances in which physical manipulation of materials may help pupils absorb ideas a lot sooner and better than they would through verbal

media. Representational aids to teaching that communicate through the sense of touch ought to be tested especially in slum schools where the physical expressiveness of children seems more commonplace and vivid. If the sense of touch or the feeling for role-playing provide methodological possibilities for better learning, by all means let's use the Montessori, Cuisinaire, Skinner machine, and puppetry materials and judge how well they work. There is much room for experimentation with manipulative materials today, thanks to the ingenuity of designers and manufacturers of educational equipment.

Sometimes, appropriate material can remove the communications barrier between teacher and pupil. Where both are operating on different wavelengths, a way out of the difficulty is to remove the burden of instruction from the teacher and place it on the materials. Well-designed programmed instruction aids are examples of such devices since they are designed to follow the pupil's mental convolutions that lead him from ignorance to mastery. There is no teacher to lead him astray with expressions that confuse or fail to register with him. Perhaps a closer look at the possibilities of teacher-as-facilitator rather than teacher-as-sole-dispenser of knowledge is worthwhile in slum schools where problems of communications are so enormous.

3. The need for better-focused teacher training: - With teaching problems in slum schools so severe, it is truly astonishing that so little attention has been paid to special preparation for service in these schools. I imagine one good reason may be that we lack enough knowledge about the subject to incorporate it in a series of courses that add up to a teacher-training program. Nevertheless, we have failed to capitalize on the little we can do.

The attempt to remedy this oversight with undergraduates at Hunter College is certainly worthy of encouragement, perhaps applause too. It is a first step in the right direction and does not pretend to go far enough. Fourth year students about to enter student teaching are invited to volunteer for field work in a slum school with the promise that they will fill staff positions there when (and if) they eventually earn their licenses. They are offered also more intensive supervision during the pre-service period in the hope that it will help orient them better to the special problems of the school. There is preliminary evidence that this self-elected group scores lower on the Authoritarian F Scale than the usual crop of student teachers. Such early findings raise the hope that diagnostic screening devices currently used in the program may someday reveal the kinds of personal qualities necessary for teacher success in slum classrooms.

The idea of grooming a teacher for a particular school and grade beginning in undergraduate days has a good deal of merit. It reduces the shock of exposure to a difficult situation when the teacher is already out on a limb and in the throes of full responsibility. Hopefully, this easing into the situation with lots of early support will help reduce teacher turnover. But special help should not terminate upon graduation or when the license is earned and the school assignment is made. Newly appointed teachers should continue to get intensive aid for at least the first year or two of service. Help with teaching techniques and materials from experienced master teachers on the scene would be most desirable if the novice's teaching assignment could be adjusted sufficiently to allow time for on-the-job training. It would also enable the teacher to bring to life her textbook knowledge of the slum family by visiting her pupils' homes and gaining firsthand knowledge of their living conditions and how they affect school performance and behavior. The possibilities of establishing closer home-school ties thereby are likewise most promising.

4. The need for establishing appropriate teacher style and technique: - In one slum area project (Syracuse) a good deal of interest is being shown toward the teacher as ham, or the theatrical side of instruction. The experts there suspect that the person with a flair for the dramatic is most successful in depressed areas, and there is method to their madness. Pointing to the motoric orientation of slum children, they reason that pure verbal exchange does not get across nearly as well as a more stagey style. For some reason that is not too clear to me, they have named it the "emphatic approach," and I wish them well in their novel efforts at heightening motivation in the classroom. Any headway with this demoralizing problem would be most welcome.

Another promising innovation in teacher technique can be found in the already well-known pre-school programs run by the Institute for Developmental Studies of the New York Medical College. The attractiveness of the programs stems from the fact that, unlike so many others, they operate from a theoretic base and are subject to evaluation. By re-defining pre-school education as truly preparatory to formal schooling, they endeavor to repair some of the experiential deficits that are likely to handicap slum children once they reach the first grade. Teachers use a wide variety of techniques and materials to help these children see the power and beauty of words and sentences; develop their understanding of abstract concepts; sharpen their attention and memory skills; and enlarge their vocabularies, interests, and reservoir of ideas. Skill in working with parents in order to gain their support and enlist their aid is also part of the program.

This head-on attack on the language deficiency problems is a courageous gesture. Not only does it tangle with a most difficult area of concern, but its expectations are also high. Too often, the teacher's recognition and

acceptance of learning failure tend inadvertently to perpetuate the problem. Underachievement becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy as teacher expectations are low and pupils tend to live up to them. Sometimes I think teachers ought to discard what they know about the scholastic handicaps of lower status children and pitch their sights far above the level they would if their emotions were ruled by feelings of sympathy. It may sound awfully spartan, but Sam Shepherd of the Banneker School District in St. Louis insists it works.

Any attempt at motivating lower status children to new heights of accomplishment should include efforts at re-defining (or defining) their self-image. I am aware of Martin Deutsch's rather discouraging failure to find a direct relationship between the slum pupil's self-image and his school achievement. Still, I am not ready to throw in the towel.

Some of the systematic attempts at creating a self-image more positively identified with school work may prove to have a strong motivational effect on pupils. In a Syracuse school, for example, the camera is used ingeniously toward this end. Bulletin boards are filled with enlarged candid shots of children engaged in all sorts of productive activity. There are photographs of individuals reading, thinking and experimenting; small groups in the heat of discussion; and entire classes in rapt attention during a lesson. I know how difficult it is to measure the effects of this pictorial marriage of the slum child with a scholastic artifact, especially since matrimony experts would not ordinarily regard the couple as exactly "made for each other." But I do suspect that the technique helps cast a special light on the pupil's self-image, clarifying thereby the possibilities of education playing a meaningful role in his life.

5. The need to systematize various kinds of "corrective" services at school: - Along with many other critics of education, I believe that slum

children need more teaching and guidance help than they are getting. If Martin Deutsch's rough estimate is accurate, only about 50% of class time is spent on instruction in the average difficult school. The time loss is not nearly as severe in better neighborhood schools. Ironically, therefore, those who need the services most are getting them least.

The problem is not so much the absence of services but their full and proper utilization. For example, New York City has a veritable alphabet soup of specialists in reading, many of whom are assigned to slum schools. There are the R.I.T.'s (Reading Improvement Teachers), C.R.T.'s (Corrective Reading Teachers), and R.R.T's (Remedial Reading Teachers). Each works in a different setting, with differenct sized groups. The criteria for selecting clients for each service are different to some extent, though not always clearly so. But there is no defined difference in methodology, nor are there special educational qualifications for each type of specialist. As a result, there is always the danger of these helpers tripping over each other and duplicating rather than coordinating services.

Similar confusion is often a problem among other pupil personnel services as well. Guidance counselors, social workers, attendance teachers, and school psychologists are sometimes so involved in picking each other out of their hair that the clients to be served somehow slip through untouched by these professional hands. The result is often a mutual distrust and a jockeying for power among the services. I sometimes think that if an efficiency expert mashed the services into a well-oiled program, far more pupils might be reached at far lower cost in manpower.

One final wrap-up statement. The thoughts I have expressed are neither original nor earth-shaking. I am certainly not ready to say that any curriculum

idea I have advanced would make a particle of difference in the slum child's educational growth. Unless we test each of them objectively we will never know. But if there is one plea I can make it is for objectivity and intellectual honesty. Just as the lower status child cannot be helped to perform well at school simply by our wanting to believe he can succeed, neither does a particular educational approach produce results simply because our faith dictates that it must. It is within our democratic life-blood to want to search for ways of equalizing educational services and social opportunities among our various sub-cultures. That search can be profitable only if we don't fall prey to smugness about our accomplishments in this direction. Some people "solve" the special problem of educating slum children by denying that it is special and buttressing their denials with mis-applied democratic slogans. Others propagandize get-rich quick solutions that are gimmicky and untested. To both types of false Messiahs I can only ask in undiluted Brooklynese: "Who are you kidding?"